

Diabetes

15 HEALTHCARE ESSENTIALS

The minimum level of healthcare everyone with diabetes should receive

Having the right care is essential for the wellbeing of all people with diabetes. There is a minimum level of healthcare that every person with diabetes deserves and should expect. Here are the **15 essential checks and services you should receive.**

Use this list to talk to your healthcare team about your individual needs as part of your annual care planning review, where you should agree your priorities, targets and a written plan of action to help you reach them.

- 1 Get your blood glucose levels measured** at least once a year. An HbA1c blood test measures your overall blood glucose control over the previous three months and helps you and your diabetes healthcare team set your own target. This long-term picture is different from self-monitoring your blood glucose levels, which indicates your blood glucose level at the time of the test. For many people with diabetes self-monitoring is necessary to manage their diabetes well. Not everyone needs to self-monitor, but if you do you should have access to test strips and the equipment you need.
- 2 Have your blood pressure measured** and recorded at least once a year, and agree a personal target that is right for you.
- 3 Have your blood fats (such as cholesterol and triglycerides) measured** every year. Like blood glucose levels and blood pressure, you should have your own targets that are realistic and achievable.
- 4 Have your eyes screened for signs of retinopathy** every year by your local diabetic eye screening service*. A special camera is used to take a photo of your retina (at the back of your eye) and a specialist will look for any changes. This free test is different to the checks carried out by an optician. If you notice any sight changes between appointments it is important to contact your optometrist or GP.
- 5 Have your feet and legs checked.** The skin, circulation and nerve supply of your feet and legs should be examined at least once a year, normally by your GP or practice nurse, but also if problems arise or on admission to hospital. You should be told if you are at risk of foot problems, how serious they are and if you need to be referred to a specialist podiatrist or foot clinic.
- 6 Have your kidney function monitored** annually. You should have two tests: a urine test for protein (a sign of possible kidney problems) and a blood test to measure kidney function.
- 7 Get individual, ongoing dietary advice** from a healthcare professional with appropriate expertise in nutrition, and be referred to a dietitian for tailored advice if necessary. You should have the opportunity to check your weight and get the support and information you need to manage your weight.

- 8 Get emotional and psychological support.** Being diagnosed with diabetes and living with a long term condition can be difficult. You should be able to talk about your issues and concerns with specialist healthcare professionals.
- 9 Be offered a group education course** in your local area, on diagnosis or as a yearly refresher, to help you understand and manage your diabetes. If you are unable or don't wish to attend a group course, you should be offered an alternative.
- 10 See specialist diabetes healthcare professionals** to help you manage your diabetes. Diabetes affects different parts of the body and you should be referred to specialist professionals when needed, such as a diabetes specialist nurse, dietitian, ophthalmologist, pharmacist or podiatrist.
- 11 Get a free flu vaccination** every year from your GP. People with diabetes are at greater risk of severe illness, such as pneumonia, if they get flu. You should also be given a personal care plan telling you what steps to take if you are ill.
- 12 Receive high-quality care if admitted to hospital.** If you have to stay in hospital, you should still receive high-quality diabetes care from specialist healthcare professionals, whether you have been admitted due to your diabetes or not.
- 13 Have the opportunity to talk about any sexual problems** you might be experiencing. Diabetes increases the risk of sexual dysfunction in both men and women and can be caused by physical, emotional and lifestyle factors, or medication you might be taking. You should be assessed and given support and education, and referred to an appropriate service if necessary.
- 14 If you smoke,** get support and advice on how to quit. Diabetes increases your risk of heart disease and stroke, and smoking further increases this risk.
- 15 Get information and specialist care if you are planning to have a baby.** Your diabetes control has to be a lot tighter and monitored very closely before and during pregnancy. You should expect support from specialist healthcare professionals at every stage from preconception to post-natal care.

For more information on the 15 Healthcare Essentials and what to do if you're not getting them, go to: www.diabetes.org.uk/15-essentials

For information, advice and support call our Helpline on **0345 123 2399****

There are different guidelines for children and young people, and you should receive care from a specialist diabetes paediatric team. To find out more go to:

www.diabetes.org.uk/Type-1-essentials

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* In some areas this may be every two years for those with no problems.

**Calls may be recorded for quality and training purposes. A charity registered in England and Wales (215199) and in Scotland (SC039136). © Diabetes UK 2016 0005B.